A growing number of kids and their families are using their home computers to explore the world. Are you one of those kids? And if so, are you ready for what's out there?

Kids On-line
Have You 'Surfed The Net' Yet?

—Tony Freeman/PhotoEdit

RECYCLED PAPER

What Lessons Does TV Teach?

Does watching TV shows like *The Simpsons* or *Married ... With Children* make you disrespect your parents? According to a recent survey, most kids would say yes.

The survey asked kids what messages they think TV gives them about what's right and what's wrong. Their answers show that kids want TV to teach them the difference between wrong and right but that too often, it just doesn't deliver.

The Pressures of TV

Children Now, a children's-rights group in California, recently surveyed about 750 kids between the ages of 10 and 16. According to results of that survey, 66 percent of kids think TV greatly influences what young people think and do in real life.

"TV pressures kids my age," says Rayelyn Rodriguez, 14, one of the kids surveyed. "They think if they see it on TV, they want to do it too."

Two-thirds of kids also said that certain shows encourage kids to be disrespectful to their parents. Yet 82 percent of kids wanted TV to teach them right from wrong.

Jim Steyer, an official for Children Now, worries about the messages kids get from TV. "Television's images help shape how young people view themselves and their place in the world," says Steyer. "TV can expand a child's aspirations, or it can limit her horizons."

TV Kids Aren't Real

Most experts agree that television, like real life, is both good and bad. But for kids, that's about where the similarity ends. A study conducted by researchers at the University of Washington found that kids on TV don't face the kinds of problems and situations real kids face.

For instance, only 10 percent of TV programs show kids dealing with such problems as racism or substance abuse. Only 2 percent show kids confronting family crises or struggling with family values.

Katherine Heintz-Knowles, who directed the study, says the lives of kids on TV are easier and more exciting than are the lives of most kids in real life. School life isn't portrayed realistically either, say critics. "Children are rarely shown doing homework

Cast members of the hit TV show *Roseanne* strike a friendly pose. Some critics say *Roseanne* and other shows like it encourage kids to be disrespectful to their parents or other adults.

—Capital Cities/ABC, Inc.

Cast members of the top-rated sitcom *Home Improvement* take a break from taping for a quick photo. Some people say kids on TV don't show what real kids are actually like.

—Capital Cities/ABC, Inc.

or enjoying the learning process," says Heintz-Knowles. "Instead, there is [on TV] a sense that school is the place to see your friends."
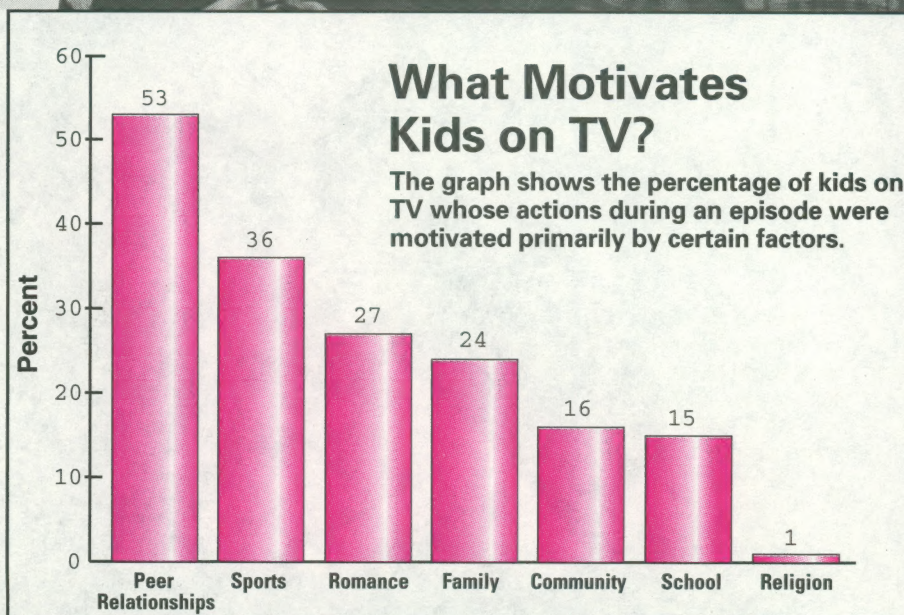
Don't Blame TV

Many TV producers agree that TV plays a large role in the lives of many kids. "We have an awesome responsibility," says Charles Rosin, producer of the show *Beverly Hills 90210*. "We realize that things we put on our show can have a significant impact on our audience."

Rosin believes, however, that the problems kids have in real life shouldn't be blamed on TV. Another producer, Leslie Ray, agrees and says parents should play a larger role in deciding what their kids watch on TV.

"It's not our responsibility to police what children watch," says Ray. "We're not the parents. We can't make people turn their TV off."

Steyer, of Children Now, doesn't want the television industry to act like parents, just to be more responsible. "Listen to what kids themselves say," says Steyer. Then, he says, act accordingly.

CRITICAL ? THINKING If you were the producer of a TV show, would you show kids as they really are or the way kids are usually portrayed on TV? Explain your response.

What Motivates Kids on TV?

The graph shows the percentage of kids on TV whose actions during an episode were motivated primarily by certain factors.

Percent

Category	Percent
Peer Relationships	53
Sports	36
Romance	27
Family	24
Community	16
School	15
Religion	1

—Vilma Ortiz

Source: University of Washington, 1994

Figures do not add up to 100 percent because more than one motivating factor might have been involved in the actions of a kid during one of a total of three episodes of each show studied.

RECYCLABLE RECYCLABLE

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Kids On-
Have You 'Surf

John Tresch Fienberg goes on-line whenever he can. He spends hours at the computer, his 11-year-old hands gliding a mouse across a colored pad.

John loves to go on-line and "surf the Net"— a slang term that means to navigate through the *Internet,* a worldwide communications network. When John goes on-line, his eyes stay glued to the screen. "If we didn't actively go upstairs and yank him off," says John's mother, "he'd fall asleep in front of it."

John, like a growing number of kids across the nation, is hooked on being on-line. As the

number of kids
wondering: Is b

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—Lane Turner/The Boston Globe

**Leah Levin Beefe
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line
ed The Net' Yet?

n-line grows, though, many parents are
g on-line good or bad for kids?

e?

er of people using the Internet has
doubled in the last two years. On-line
p into a growing number of *on-line ser-*
panies that provide computer users
iety of services. On-line services allow
hop for clothing, buy airline tickets, or
with people who live on the other side
—or the globe.

tap into the Internet also have access
ion from an enormous number of
a banks, universities, museums, and
ces throughout the world. Many kids
net to research reports for school or to
better understand their homework

Beeferman, a 12-year-old from Cam-
chusetts, uses the Internet to research
. But she uses it more often to play a
lulti-User Simulated Environment, or
lays MUSE simultaneously with
as far away as Sweden. Says Leah,
cause you get to meet people from

Time

MUSE, but her parents aren't too
At one point, they grew concerned
ending too much time—about five
g at the family's computer. "We
s end," says Leah's mother, Ann
lose to beginning family therapy."
concerns expressed by many par-
California psychotherapist Judah
le who spend a lot of time on-line
so accustomed to relating to others
omputer that they have trouble relat-
ace.
ho specializes in treating emotional
ng computer professionals, says that
rt in learning to relate to real, breath-
equent Internet users] can become
ressed."

man, 12, and her parents (background)
e amount of time Leah spends on-line. She
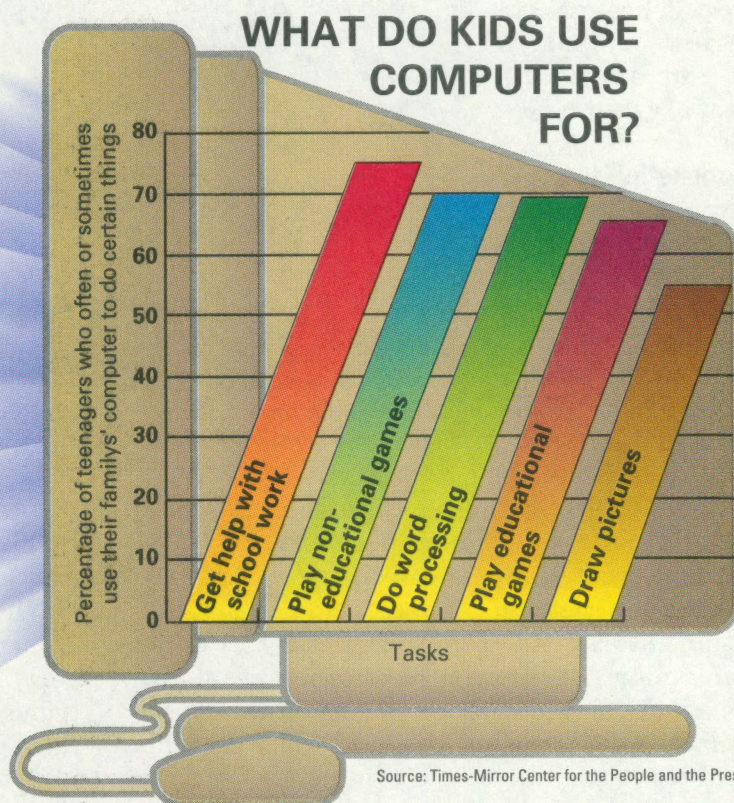ys off from the computer each week.

Not for Kids Only

Many parents also worry about the types of services
their kids could stumble onto or search out deliberately.
Some services are meant for adult users only and contain
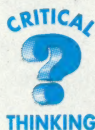images and text not suitable for kids.

Peter Banks, an official for the National Center for
Missing and Exploited Children, says kids should follow
some commonsense tips when they go on-line. He says
kids should

• never respond to offensive messages of any kind.

• never give out identifying information such as a
home address, a school address, or a telephone number
to someone on the Internet.

• never arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone
they meet on the Internet.

Computer experts say kids who follow those guide-
lines—and who limit their time on-line—can have fun,
learn a lot, and stay safe when they surf the Net.

WHAT DO KIDS USE COMPUTERS FOR?

Percentage of teenagers who often or sometimes use their familys' computer to do certain things

Tasks: Get help with school work, Play non-educational games, Do word processing, Play educational games, Draw pictures

—Mike DiGiorgio

Source: Times-Mirror Center for the People and the Press, 1994

CRITICAL ? THINKING

Suppose a teen spends five hours a day on-line. The
teen's parents say she spends too much time on the
computer and not enough with the family. But the teen
doesn't want to cut back on her on-line time. What
solutions might you offer the family?

Computer Crime Hits Home

For more than two years, Kevin Mitnick had been breaking into computers throughout the United States. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agents couldn't find him to arrest him.

Then Mitnick made a mistake. He broke into the computer of Tsutomu Shimomura, a well-known expert in computer security. Shimomura helped FBI agents track Mitnick to Raleigh, North Carolina, where they arrested him for computer crimes.

Mitnick is one of a new breed of so-called *cybercriminals,* people who commit crimes with a computer. Police experts say few computers are immune to the threat of cybercrime.

Skyrocketing Crime

From 1989 to 1994, the number of computer break-ins in the United States jumped by almost 1,800 percent. The FBI expects the number of cybercrimes to keep rising, as more companies and individuals use the *Internet.* The Internet is the world's largest communications network.

Skilled cybercriminals use their computers to roam the Internet and gain access to private information stored in other computers. Some cybercriminals steal secret files. Others plant programs that damage other computers. Both acts are criminal. As a teenager, Kevin Mitnick used his computer to gain access to confidential records stored in his high school's computer.

Most cybercriminals don't crack computers in high schools; they're too busy cracking computers in businesses. Many companies use the Internet to conduct essential business. But, experts say, few of those companies are aware of how defenseless their systems are against computer criminals.

"The Internet is like a vault with a screen door on the back," explains AT&T computer-security specialist William Cheswick. "I don't need jackhammers and atom bombs to get in when I can walk through the door."

Revolving Door

Mitnick walked through that door many times. During his most recent crime spree, Mitnick raided a company's computer system and stole the confidential identification numbers of 20,000 credit-card owners. He could have used those numbers to charge thousands of dollars in purchases.

Experts suggest that Internet users protect important files by installing programs that use complicated passwords or programs that contain special codes. Cybercriminals can't easily break into computers safeguarded by those programs.

When they do, say experts, people like Tsutomu Shimomura will be waiting. "We take these things very seriously," says Shimomura about cybercrimes. "What I would really like to do is teach these guys some manners."
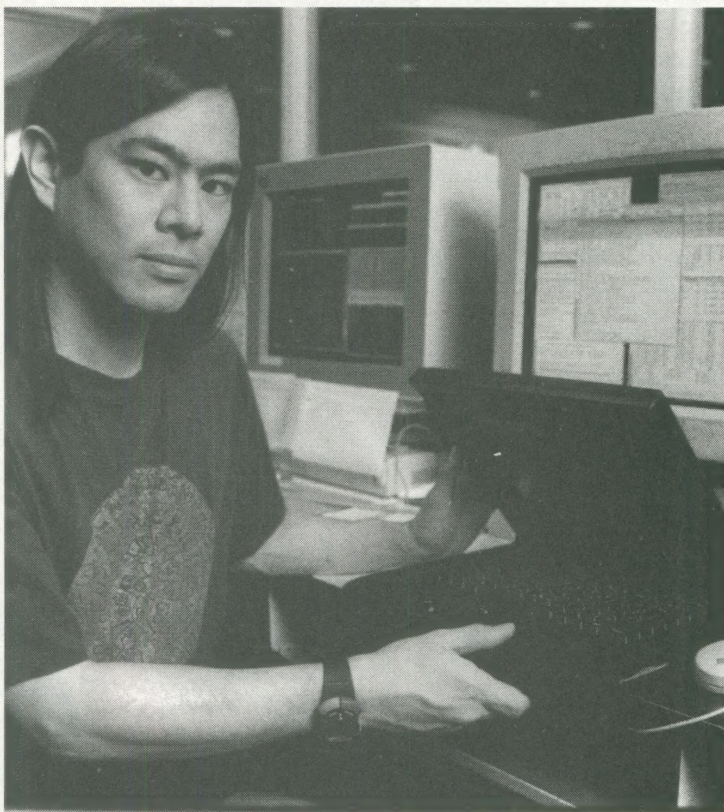
Tsutomu Shimomura, 30, works on a computer at home. Shimomura used his computer to help the FBI track Mitnick.

—Alan Decker/NYT Photos

CRITICAL THINKING

? If you were a judge in a cybercrime case, what penalties might you give a person who stole confidential government files? who planted a harmful program in a hospital's computer system?

MEMORY LANE

Remember Bender

How sharp is your memory? Try this activity to find out! Study this scene for about one minute, then turn the page. On a separate sheet of paper, list the activity each person on the page is engaged in. Give yourself 1 point for each activity you remember. How do you rate?
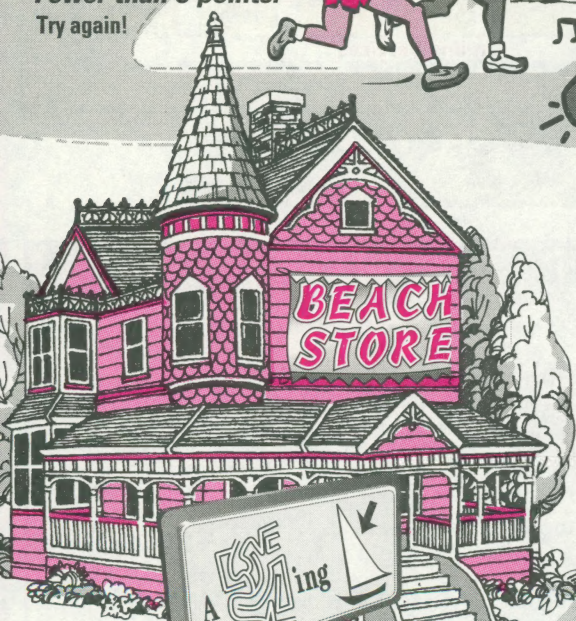
10 or more points:
You've got a picture-perfect memory!

5–10 points:
What an eye for detail!

Fewer than 5 points:
Try again!

—Pat Rasch

Picture Perfect

All the signs in this town are "written" in symbols and drawings. Can you translate the symbols to read the signs?

Memory Brain Buster

On a separate sheet of paper, draw the pattern of squares shown above so the squares are large enough to write in. In the correct squares, write the numbers and the letters that accompany each number on the pad of a telephone. Then look at a phone. How many numbers and letters did you get right?

—Vilma Ortiz

Millions Go On-Line!

GRAPH ACTIVITY

Circle the letter of the response that best completes each statement.

1. Just over a million people subscribe to **(A)** CompuServe, **(B)** America Online, **(C)** Prodigy.
2. Twice as many people subscribe to CompuServe as to **(A)** Prodigy, **(B)** Delphi, **(C)** GEnie.
3. Seventy-five thousand people subscribe to **(A)** Prodigy, **(B)** Delphi, **(C)** GEnie.
4. The number of people who subscribe to Delphi, GEnie, and Apple's eWorld combined is about **(A)** 150,000; **(B)** 240,000; **(C)** 500,000.
5. More than ten times as many people subscribe to Prodigy than to **(A)** America Online, **(B)** Delphi, **(C)** GEnie.
6. The number of people who subscribe to the six on-line services shown is about **(A)** 3.5 million, **(B)** 4.8 million, **(C)** 5.4 million.
7. Twenty times as many people subscribe to America Online as to **(A)** Prodigy, **(B)** Delphi, **(C)** GEnie.

CRITICAL ? THINKING What might make one on-line service more attractive to potential subscribers than other on-line services?

Graph

Number of people subscribing to an on-line service

- Compu-Serve 2.45 million
- America Online 1.5 million
- Prodigy 1.2 million
- Delphi 100,000
- GEnie 75,000
- Apple's eWorld 65,000

On-line Service

Source: *The Washington Post*, January 17, 1995

—Mike DiSiarip

PICK A WORD

Choose the word that best fits the meaning of each sentence. Not all the words on the list are used.

access	intensive	offensive
aspire	isolated	portray
influence	justified	resources

1. "You hardly ever study," said the teacher. "Don't you _____ to anything?"
2. The actor wanted to _____ the lawmaker in the TV movie.
3. She spends so much time on-line that she gets _____ from friends.
4. He used a key and a special password to gain _____ to the bank vault.
5. They found that photo of dead people in Bosnia to be _____.
6. Don't try to _____ me one way or the other.
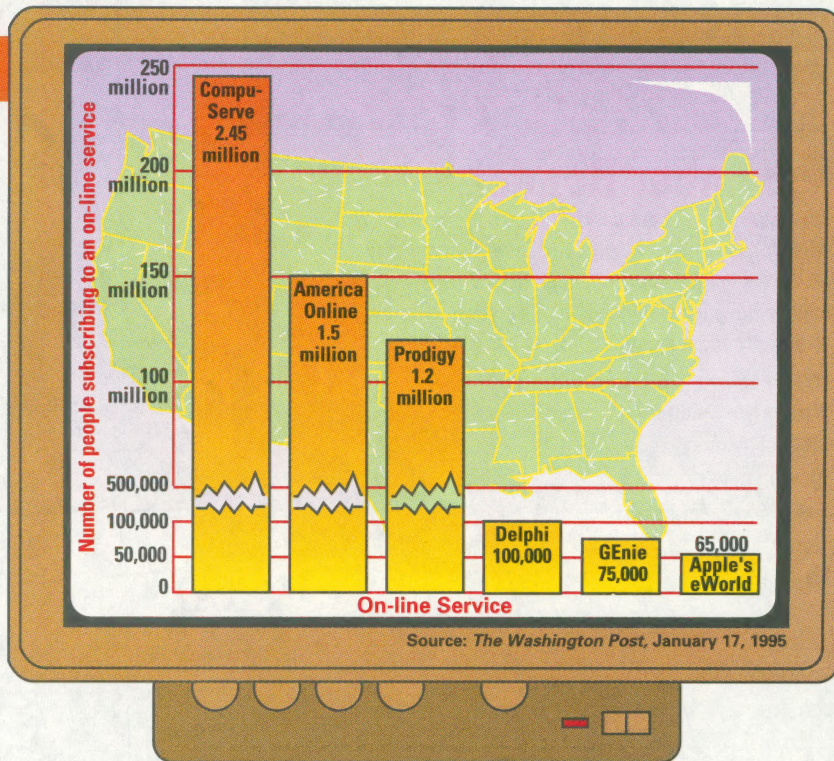
JUST THE STATS, PLEASE

Circle the letter of the statistic that best fits the information provided.

1. The percentage of kids who think TV greatly influences what young people think and do in real life (p. 2)
   (A) 35 percent   **(B)** 66 percent   **(C)** 82 percent
2. The percentage of TV programs that show kids dealing with such problems as racism or substance abuse (p. 2)
   (A) 10 percent   **(B)** 25 percent   **(C)** 45 percent
3. The percentage of TV programs that show kids confronting family crises or struggling with family values (p. 2)
   (A) 2 percent   **(B)** 10 percent   **(C)** 25 percent
4. The approximate percentage of kids who say certain shows encourage kids to be disrespectful to their parents (p. 2)
   (A) 33 percent   **(B)** 50 percent   **(C)** 67 percent
5. The percentage of kids who say they want TV to teach them right from wrong (p. 2)
   (A) 45 percent   **(B)** 52 percent   **(C)** 82 percent
6. The change in the number of people who use the Internet now as opposed to two years ago (p. 4)
   (A) doubled   **(B)** quadrupled   **(C)** ten times more

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHY BEE

Austria, Hungary, Slovakia, and Yugoslavia all have their capital cities on the banks of what river?